

were at home. We beg him to number us among his children.' This I did at once by putting my hands on the head of each chief, which is the usual ceremony, answered by loud shouts of joy and thanks. I then said to the Assiniboinés: 'I am sending four Frenchmen to my fort to give my news there; I recommend you to get them to that place as soon as you can. I have left powder in the village, and all that is necessary to have them brought.' The council ended with loud thanks from both parties. As the Assiniboinés did not yet speak of leaving, although they had purchased all they were able to do, such as painted ox robes, deer skin, dressed buckskin and ornamented furs and feathers, painted feathers and peltry, wrought garters, circlets for the head, girdles. These people dress leather better than any of the other nations and work in furs and feathers very tastefully, which the Assiniboinés are not capable of doing. They are cunning traders, cheating the Assiniboinés of all they may possess, such as muskets, powder, balls, kettles, axes, knives or awls. Seeing the great consumption of food daily by the Assiniboinés, and afraid that it would not last long, they set afloat a rumor that the Sioux were near and that several of their hunters had noticed them. The Assiniboinés fell into the trap and made up their minds quickly to decamp, not wishing to be obliged to fight. A Mandan chief let me understand by a sign that the rumor about the Sioux was to get rid of the Assiniboinés. At six in the morning they all left in great haste, believing that the Sioux were near and fearing that the road might be blocked up. The chief with whom I had lodged brought five men to remain with me, saying: 'My father, I still hope that you will join us for a little; I march peaceably. Here are five of my young men, whom I give thee to remain with thee and to guide thee when thou shall wish to leave.' I made him a small present to thank him, telling him that he knew that I had sense and that I intended shortly to reward him for his attention. He left with great protestations of friendship. I was notified shortly after that an interpreter whom I had paid liberally to secure him had decamped in spite of all the offers which my son, the Chevalier, had made him, as he was going after an Assiniboine woman with whom he had fallen in love, but who would not remain with him. He was a young man of the Cree nation, speaking good Assiniboine. As there were several Mandans who spoke it well enough, I made myself very well under-

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MISSION HOUSE, ELBOWOODS, N. D.

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MANDAN WOMAN SCRAPING HIDE.

[facing p. 640]

223 Eagle-trapping expeditions were organized for a dual purpose,
 224 namely, the securing of feathers and of a winter's supply of
 meat and hides. Crows Heart thought that, taken year after
 year, the meat and hides secured had greater worth than the
 feathers. As he explained, it was not unusual to return without
 feathers, but game was always abundant once one reached ter-
 ritory not ordinarily hunted in. He remarked, on many occa-
 sions, that a village as a unit would never go to rough country
 on a summer hunt, as there would be few buffaloes there, and it
 would be difficult to surround them because of the uneven
 topography. There was the further danger of ambush: The
 rough lands were hunted over by small bands, chiefly eagle-
 trappers and war parties.

223 The appearance of ice on the edges of streams was the signal
 224 for the eagle-trapping expedition to return to the village. Before
 505 horses became numerous in the villages, it was customary to
 travel overland to the trapping sites, where bullboats were
 made of buffalo and elk hides for floating back the meat and
 hides to the village. In order not to be caught along the way by
 a sudden freezing of the river, it was imperative that trapping
 cease immediately with the first appearance of cold weather.

224 While in the trapping camp, the women received the meat
 251 and hides brought in by the men. The meat was cured on scaff-
 281 folds, and the hides were dried or made into bullboats. Special
 effort was made to secure mountain sheep, as the badlands were
 the habitat of these prized animals, used for men's shirts and
 women's dresses, since their skins tanned softer than any other
 hide. Bears Arm, in explaining the importance of the meat and
 hides secured on these expeditions, stated that single women
 [587] tried to marry young men so they could go along to help cure
 the meat and hides, knowing they might marry one so lucky as
 to kill a white buffalo.

223 Mandan tradition appears devoid of reference to recent divi-
 361 sion of a village population into small eagle-trapping bands dur-
 171 ing the winter. Such is not the case with the Hidatsa, however.
 221 In the Earthnaming ceremony of the Hidatsa there is reference
 621 in the myth to the division of the village into small bands
 camped along the Little Missouri River in eagle-trapping lodges
 during the winter. At least two of the clans, the Maxoxati and

● 281 Verendrye mentions their skill in making such things as
 237 painted ox-robcs, deer skin, dressed buckskin, and ornamented
 fur and feathers, painted feathers, peltry, wrought garters,
 circlets for the head, and girdles. They certainly understood
 the art of dressing skins, though perhaps other nations equalled
 them. All their visitors speak of the ornamented robes for the
 decoration of which porcupine quills dyed various colors, or the
 pigments themselves, as paints, were used at first, though beads
 [532] came gradually to take their places. The ornamentation con-
 sisted usually of representations of animals, and pictographic
 records. When leather got wet, it was beaten and rubbed with
 white clay which they always carried with them. This kept
 the robes soft. Then there were medicine bags, tobacco
 pouches, sheathes for knives and bows, all of skin, painted or
 embroidered with quills, such as are seen over the whole plains
 [231] area. They had leather bridles for their horses, sometimes
 embroidered, and used a saddle, similar to that of the Dakotas.
 The horses were caught by means of long raw hide lariats which
 the Indians made themselves.

534 Whistles were also necessary articles to those belonging to
 the societies. Maximilian¹ describes them as "long wooden
 whistles at whose lower end an eagle feather on a string dangles."
 He says they also had large flute whistles, twenty inches long,
 with holes to vary the notes by application of the fingers. Be-
 sides these were the war whistles, usually made from the wing
 412 bone of some large bird. Other articles of bone, necessitated
 321 by the great use of skins, were the bone scrapers, needles and
 awls with which each house was profusely supplied.

241 Almost the only agricultural implements which they used
 were hoes. These were the shoulder blades of buffalo or occa-
 sionally of elk, which were cut down and to which a crooked
 stick was fastened as a handle.²

415 Among their cooking utensils, which were used in every hut,
 were spoons and ladles of bighorn and buffalo horns. Veren-
 drye says some of these ladles held as much as three pints.

286 So far as the accounts go the Mandans did not make any
 textile fabric, though the Arikara are known to have made

¹ Op. cit., p. 416.

² Henry: vol. I, p. 343.

garters and belts of buffalo hair.

THE MANDANS—MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

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This custom exists among most of the nations on the Missouri, and even among the Esquimaux there is a somewhat similar usage. If the adopted son and father have not happened to meet for a long time, they make presents to each other; the father gives the son a new dress, and the latter presents him with a good horse. Among all the Indian nations of North America, there is a particular class of men, who are specially engaged in all the above-mentioned ceremonies and medicines. They are, also, the physicians, and are called, among the Mandans, Numak-Choppenih, which signifies medicine man.

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The skin of a white buffalo cow is an important article, and an eminent medicine in the opinion of the Mandans and Manitaries. He who has never possessed one of them is not respected. Suppose two men to be disputing about their exploits, the one an old veteran warrior, who has slain many enemies, the other, a young lad without experience; the latter reproaches the other with never having possessed a white buffalo cow hide, on which the old man droops his head, and covers his face for shame. He who possesses such a hide generally offers it to the lord of life, to whom he dedicates it, or, which is equivalent, to the sun, or to the first man. He collects, perhaps, in the course of a whole twelvemonth, various articles of value, and then hangs them up all together on a high pole in the open prairie, generally in the neighbourhood of the burying-place, or in the village before his hut. Distinguished men and chiefs of eminence are for the most part poor, because, in order to gain reputation and influence, they give away everything of value which they possess. A large number of relatives is one of the chief means of acquiring riches, for a young man who wishes to distinguish himself, and to be liberal, does honour to the whole family, who assist him to the utmost of their power. When one of his relations has anything of value, the young man goes to the owner to demand it, and not unfrequently takes it away without ceremony. Sometimes he hangs his head in silence, and then something of value is given him, a handsome dress, a horse, &c. If he wishes to gain reputation and a claim to distinction, it is necessary that he should make presents. All the people in the village notice very accurately what presents are made, and the donor has a right to display all such presents painted on his robes, and in this manner to hand down his reputation to posterity, as has been already related. This and military glory are, in the eyes of these men, the greatest virtues. They dare not draw a stroke too much on their robes for the horses, guns, &c., which they have given away, for the young men keep a most strict account against each other, and universal ridicule would be the immediate consequence of violating this rule. Among the distinctions of any man, the white buffalo hide is the greatest. He who has not been so fortunate as to kill a white buffalo himself, which is generally the case, as these animals are very rare, purchases a hide, often at a great distance from home, and other nations bring them hither, being well aware of the great value attached to them by the Mandans. The hide must be that of a young cow, not above two years old, and be taken off complete and tanned, with the horns,

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778 nose, hoofs, and tail. The value of ten to fifteen horses is given for it. A certain Mandan gave
 281 ten horses, a gun, some kettles, and other articles, for such a hide. The white hide of a bull or
 [435] of an old cow is by no means so valuable. The white hide of a young cow suffices for all the
 daughters of a family. They do not wear it as a robe, like the Manitaries, or, at the utmost, the
 wife, or one of the daughters of the family, wears it once at some great festival, but never a second
 796 time. The Mandans have particular ceremonies at the dedication of the hide. As soon as they
 have obtained it they engage an eminent medicine man, who must throw it over him; he then
 walks round the village in the apparent direction of the sun's course, and sings a medicine song.
 When the owner, after collecting articles of value for three or four years, desires to offer his
 treasure to the lord of life, or to the first man, he rolls it up, after adding some wormwood or a
 head of maize, and the skin then remains suspended on a high pole till it rots away. At the
 time of my visit there was such an offering at Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kush, near the stages for the dead
 without the village. Sometimes, when the ceremony of dedication is finished, the hide is cut
 into small strips, and the members of the family wear parts of it tied over the head, or across the
 554 forehead, when they are in full dress. If a Mandan kills a young white buffalo cow, it is
 224 accounted to him as more than an exploit, or having killed an enemy. He does not cut up the
 animal himself, but employs another man, to whom he gives a horse for his trouble. He alone
 who has killed such an animal is allowed to wear a narrow strip of the skin in his ears. The
 whole robe is not ornamented, being esteemed superior to any other dress, however fine. The
 [435] traders have, sometimes, sold such hides to the Indians, who gave them as many as sixty other
 [136] robes in exchange. Buffalo skins with white spots are likewise highly valued by the Mandans;
 but there is a race of these animals with very soft silky hair, which has a beautiful gold lustre
 when in the sunshine: these are, likewise, highly prized, and sold for ten or fifteen dollars, and,
 778 sometimes, for the value of a horse. Besides the white buffalo skins which are offered in sacrifice
 and hung on poles, there are, in the vicinity of the villages of the Mandans and Manitaries,
 other strange figures on high poles, as represented in Plate XXV. These figures are composed
 of skin, grass, and twigs, which, it seems, represent the sun and moon, perhaps, also, the lord of
 life, and the first man. The Indians resort to them when they wish to petition for anything,
 and sometimes howl and lament for days and weeks together.

796 The Mandans have several medicine festivals, of which the Okippe, or the penitential
 ceremony of the ark, is by far the most remarkable. It is celebrated in the spring or summer,
 and I regret to say that I cannot describe it as an eye-witness. I am, however, enabled to give
 a circumstantial description of it, word for word, as it was communicated to me by men initiated
 in the mysteries of the nation.*

* The author refers to a letter on this subject, written by Mr. Catlin, and published in a New York paper; but this
 is by no means so complete as that given in his valuable work published last year.—Translator's Note.